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State Contributes \$850,000 to Plymouth's Center Hill Preserve Project

July 17, 2006 (PLYMOUTH, Mass.) – The Town of Plymouth's Community Preservation Committee recently learned that the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) has approved \$850,000 in funding to the Town of Plymouth toward the \$5.7 million purchase price of the 78-acre former Joslin Diabetes property on Center Hill Road. The funding will be used to purchase a conservation restriction on the 28 acres to comprise the east side of the Center Hill Preserve, with the restriction to be co-held by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and The Wildlands Trust of Southeastern Massachusetts (WLT).

Bill Keohan, Community Preservation Chair, said, "This is an example of how the Community Preservation Committee is able to leverage existing funds with those of the DCR and EOE. Together all of the partners and the community benefit from this conservation restriction."

"DCR, EOE, the Community Preservation Committee, Federal and State legislators and the Wildland Trust have been able create a strong partnership resulting in the preservation of this beautiful coastal property. It is only with such fantastic partnerships that this work is accomplished," stated DCR Commissioner Burrington.

"As the Secretary of Environmental Affairs I am proud of this accomplishment and the partnership formed to protect this land," said Pritchard. "Plymouth has one of the most spectacular shorelines in Southeastern Massachusetts and now it can be assured the public will have access."

The 2005 Plymouth Fall Town Meeting voted to spend \$1.6 million of CPA funds to purchase the part of the property on the west side of Center Hill Road and on May 20, 2006 Town Meeting voted to purchase the ocean-side parcels for \$4 million. The Mass. Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and Department of Conservation and Recreation committed \$850,000 in funding toward the purchase of the ocean-side parcel. The Plymouth Community Preservation Committee, The Department of Conservation and Recreation and Congressmen William Delahunt in partnership with The Wildlands Trust have also applied for a Federal grant of \$2.25 million to help further defray the cost of acquiring the land.

There has long been strong state, municipal, and federal interest in the preservation of this land. DCR had expressed interest in collaborating on the acquisition and providing funds, and strongly recommended the project to EOEA Secretary Stephen Pritchard. Plymouth's state legislative delegation, including Senator Therese Murray and Representatives Tom O'Brien and Vinny deMacedo, as well as the Plymouth Selectmen, also sent letters of support for this funding. DCR notified the Community Preservation Committee in June of the awarding of the \$850,000 grant to Plymouth.

The town was committed to taking advantage of the opportunity to preserve this outstanding coastal resource for the public good, and provide the rapidly expanding population of Plymouth with access to one of the last remaining large beachfront parcels on Cape Cod Bay. The property includes a mixture of wooded upland, an unusual brackish pond (Center Hill Pond), as well as 2600 feet of beach frontage on Cape Cod Bay. On the northeastern portion of the property are dramatic bluffs with spectacular views of Cape Cod Bay, and the landmass of Cape Cod itself from Sandwich to Provincetown. The former camp headquarters is a 2500-square foot building that is suitable for a variety of community uses and activities.

The Town took ownership of the property on June 30 and has since built two parking areas, trails and a boardwalk to the beach. The official opening of the Preserve will be on August 1 at 2 p.m. Secretary Pritchard will be in attendance and Representatives O'Brien and deMacedo as well as a representative from Senator Murray's office.

Wildlands Trust Land Protection Specialist Scott MacFaden noted that "the success of this project provides vivid testimony to the power of public/private partnerships. We are enthused about and grateful for DCR's participation in the project and for its funding commitment, and look forward to securing the future of this critical parcel".

Legislators who attended the event spoke about the importance of public access to coastal properties. Senator Therese Murray (D-Plymouth), who is the Senate's budget chief said "I am pleased that the Town of Plymouth has made the effort to acquire this magnificent piece of property. From the woodland to the pond to the magnificent coastline, the beauty and uniqueness of this property is a microcosm of our Town. Preserving this land and making sure it is open for people to enjoy this natural beauty is a tremendous benefit to the future of Plymouth."

"I would like to commend Secretary Pritchard and our federal and local delegation for their efforts in ensuring the preservation of the Center Hill Beach property," remarked Representative O'Brien. "The Town of Plymouth enjoys some of the most diverse natural resources in the Commonwealth and the state and local partnership that has been forged will ensure the preservation of 28 pristine acres of coastline and increased public access for town residents and visitors to this great town, now and for generations to come."

Representative deMacedo said "I am delighted the Town of Plymouth and the Commonwealth were able to come together to preserve this area. There is a great need for public access to the coastline and to have this land available is quite a success."